

Innovation in History: Making It Local

Innovation: Something new and different, that is also the result of human ideas or actions.
NOTE: Innovations are not always beneficial or successful.

History: The study of cause and effect, and change over time.

A good topic will focus on how a new idea or action either

1. came about as a result of the events or needs of a particular time and place, or
2. caused changes over time to a particular place.

Local history topics have several advantages:

1. Often they have been less studied than national or international topics, so the researcher tackling a local topic can make a genuine contribution to history.
2. It can be easier to find primary source material.
3. It can be interesting to discover how large national/international trends affected your home community or state.

Here are some examples of local topics that fit the theme "Innovations in History."

Electrification

How did the innovation of electrification transform Butte?

Women's Suffrage

Why was the time ripe for the innovation of women's suffrage in Montana years before other states?

Indian Boarding Schools

How did the Indian boarding schools (intended as an innovative way to assimilate Indians) affect Montana's tribes?

The Homestead Act

Why did the U.S. government innovate by passing the Homesteading Act and how did it transform Montana (or your county)?

Dry-land Farming

How did the innovative idea that "rain follows the plow" affect Montana?

Wind Power

When and how has the innovative technology of wind power found widespread acceptance in Montana?

The Automobile

How did cars transform Montana?

CRP (Conservation Reserve Program)

How did this government program (intended as an innovative way to protect the environment) affect local Montana communities?

Fort Peck Dam

How did this engineering feat come to be built in northeastern Montana?

Libby Dam

How did the growing environmental consciousness of the 1960s and 1970s create innovations that affected the construction and management of Libby Dam?

Unionization

How did the innovative idea of workers joining together into a union affect the lives of Montana's miners and/or loggers?

Smoke Jumping

How did this innovative method change firefighting?

Rocky Mountain Spotted Tick Fever Research and Vaccine

How did the research (and ultimately the vaccine) change the Bitterroot?

Logging

How did changes in logging technology effect the environment and/or how has the environmental movement affected innovations in logging?